



MUM'S THE WORD

VINCE DIMICELI

Ratner's suburban nightmare

WHEN it comes to construction, Brooklyn needs Bob Vila, not Bruce Ratner.

For years now, Ratner has forced his suburban blight on the Borough of Kings, using Brooklyn as his personal strip mine, ripping out its streets and small buildings to make way for his behemoths that turn their backs on what's left of the neighborhoods they invade.

It's been said that Ratner's plan for Downtown Brooklyn is to Manhattanize it — as if the skyscrapers he foresees are the only things that define a city.

But the fact is Ratner is trying to create a new suburbia, smack dab in the middle of the city, by using suburban ideals to create the "New Brooklyn."

Don't believe me? Take a look at some of his other projects.

•Atlantic Center Mall: The epitome of the suburban mega-mall gone bad in the middle of the city, complete with parking (for a fee). It's back is literally turned on Fort Greene, where there are no entrances for local residents, who have to walk around the complex and onto Atlantic Avenue. All this for the pleasure of shopping at the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Empire State Development Corporation, in office space created and paid for with our tax money after several mall merchants failed, ostensibly because of Ratner's poor design and promotion.

•Metrotech: A suburban business campus, self-sufficient right down to the nearby hotel and airline ticket office. Employees who work there eat in tasty, inexpensive corporate cafeterias because the campus' design makes it impractical to walk over to Montague Street or Fulton Mall or even Willoughby Street. Stores located on its center "park" don't survive because the campus' fortress-like perimeter discourages foot traffic on the streets that used to be there. And nightlife is nonexistent. Remember Casey's Cafe? Neither do I.

Now, Ratner wants to do the same thing with his proposed Atlantic Yards compound (and presumably in the overlapping Downtown Plan district) where he'd again close streets and construct skyscrapers up to 600 feet tall that would by design separate the complex from the neighborhoods of Fort Greene and Prospect Heights.

Ratner's plan, designed by Frank Gehry, would again have a "park" in its middle, and it will probably get as much use as the one at Metrotech —

which means very little.

In the meantime, a neighborhood that was developing just fine on its own gets condemned.

I was inside 24 Sixth Ave. on Saturday. It's the former Spalding factory, recently turned into condos. Close to 100 people live there in large studio apartments. One of

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THE NEW BROOKLYN

those residents, Stuart Plesser, showed me his plans to add walls in his 1,500-square-foot, exposed-brick and wood-columned apartment. Those plans are now on hold, as he waits to see if his new home will be torn down.

Last year, for his television show "Home Again," Bob Vila showed how he restored and then converted to residential use a former spice factory on Water Street in DUMBO, another hot neighborhood which, over the past 10 years, has been reconstructed from the inside out.

DUMBO's conversion from manufacturing to both housing and office space, has taken place without the clearing of blocks, removal of streets or insertion of suburban-style complexes. Instead, the neighborhood has been re-born rather than rebuilt.

In time, the same thing would happen around the Atlantic Avenue rail yards, with or without Ratner. In fact, the rebuilding of the area — from within — had already begun. Just ask Stuart Plesser.

Ratner's vision, as designed by Gehry, just isn't Brooklyn. It has no place in our low-rise urban landscape.

Maybe Ratner needs a new architect, someone who would appreciate the things Brooklyn already has to offer and those that deserve to be preserved. Maybe he should put in a call to Bob Vila.

Or, he could just take off and find another city to strip mine.

Vince Dimiceli is senior editor and production manager of the Brooklyn Papers. E-mail: Production@BrooklynPapers.com

Confused Community Board 2 fails to speak on massive D'town Plan



Above is a rendering of open space enclosed within a complex of skyscrapers that the Downtown Plan envisions along Willoughby Street between Duffield and Gold streets. The open space would be created by the seizure of private property through the state's power of eminent domain and street demolitions. The tree-lined triangle at the top would cover the site now occupied by the 57-year-old Institute of Design and Construction. Below is a Frank Gehry-envisioned mega block in developer Bruce Ratner's Atlantic Yards site — surrounded by Dean Street and Carlton, Atlantic and Vanderbilt avenues, east of Ratner's proposed Nets arena — that would likewise be built on condemned property and demapped streets. As in the Downtown Plan, which is its neighbor, green space would be surrounded by skyscrapers, creating a fortress-like environment. Downtown Plan renderings, like the one above, portray proposed structures as only a dozen or so stories tall, cutting off their tops to avoid picturing their intended heights — possibly exceeding 60 stories — that would dwarf Brooklyn's existing skyline.



Nei Sloane / CB2 blows it bigtime

IMAGINE it's the Super Bowl. Your team is down by three points but has the ball on the 1 yard line. Then the coach sends the quarterback in ... to take a knee. Game over.

What happens next? The coach gets canned.

For Community Board 2, Tuesday's vote on the Downtown Brooklyn Plan was the big game, and they had it in their hands ... and they blew it.

The coach, in this case the board's chairwoman, Shirley McRae, didn't make a bad call — she made no call at all. In fact, she literally came into the most important vote the board will likely ever be asked to make with no game plan.

What should happen next? McRae should resign her executive position, if not remove herself from the board all together.

And she's not the only one.

Ten board members could not be bothered to attend the momentous vote, or send their proxy, three board members abstained from voting and one, incredibly, came to the meeting and then hid in the hallway to avoid voting. She

should get the boot first. Her name is Rachel Foster, and she is an appointee of Councilman David Yankin.

McRae was appointed originally by the late Councilwoman Mary Pinkett. She now serves at the pleasure of Councilwoman Letitia James.

All board members ultimately serve under the appointing authority of the borough president.

After her ill-prepared board failed to reach a consensus on the one vote they took, McRae had the gall to say they were not her role to tell board members to make a motion.

Foster, the one who hid, claimed she was too intimidated by the 400 or so anti-Nets arena and anti-eminent domain protesters in the audience, according to a source. Given the circumstances of the confusing vote, and the confusion of many of the protesters as to what was being voted on, she had nothing to worry about.

I think we can do better on the board without her covering and McRae's hands-off leadership style.

With the responsibility of rendering a recommendation on the most sweep-

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THE NEW BROOKLYN

ing redevelopment proposal this borough has ever seen, McRae allowed her board, through either gross incompetence or a willful desire not to get in the way of the dream of developers that would turn Brooklyn into Manhattan, to take itself out of the process.

The board is chosen to represent the community. In the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULLURP) the board is the first to review an application, the first to hold a public hearing, and the first to render a recommendation. That

recommendation goes to the borough president and to the City Planning Commission and is generally taken into consideration (although with a majority of the planning commissioners serving at the pleasure of the mayor, the fix may well be in at that level of review).

Still, especially since the city rushed such a voluminous and complicated proposal before them — dumping the 210-page ULLURP application on the board right before the December holidays, leaving less than the required 60 days for actual consideration — the chairwoman should have scheduled a special meeting for her members to discuss and clarify each action within the plan before the meeting at which they were to vote.

The board's job was not to decide whether or not to make a recommendation — it's job was to decide what to recommend.

To quote from ULLURP rules in the City Charter: "The community board may include in its submission the reasons for the vote and any conditions attached to its vote. The community board may state that its conditional approval shall be considered a negative recommendation ... if conditions that it considers essential

to minimize land use or environmental impacts are not adopted by the [City Planning] Commission."

With such an involved plan before them — in which the city has unfairly cornered a massive rezoning with a massive urban renewal expansion to allow for a massive build-up — it was essential that the board be instructed to vote separately on the rezoning proposals and the urban renewal-eminent domain proposals within the plan, or at least separately vote on each of the land use committee's five recommendations.

Those votes would have formed the basis for an overall recommendation, which could have been made conditional.

Board member Ken Diamondstone got it. He stood up and called for an item by item vote. His fellow board members, including the chairwoman, overwhelmingly shot that proposal down.

McRae just stood by and watched as her board relinquished the community's right to weigh in. She rendered herself and her board irrelevant. Someone in authority should make it official.

Nei Sloane is the editor of The Brooklyn Papers. E-mail: Newsroom@BrooklynPapers.com

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

THE MOST COMPLEX rezoning plan in city history, which would convert Downtown Brooklyn into a booming metropolis with soaring towers and require the taking of seven acres of private land, is moving forward through the city review process — without input from Community Board 2.

Following years of planning, months of discussion and a four-hour public hearing, the Downtown Brooklyn board effectively removed itself — and the communities it represents — from the process when it gathered Tuesday night at Brooklyn Technical High School in Fort Greene to vote on the multi-layered application.

That's because most board members were baffled as to what exactly they were voting on.

"The proposal was too big — why didn't they break it down?" asked board member Irene Van Slyke, who voted to adopt the recommendations of CB2's Land Use committee.

That panel effectively culled down a more than 210-page ULLURP application and its companion 3-inch-thick Draft Environmental Impact Statement into a two-page report recommending that the board approve the upzoning of the Downtown area to allow for sweeping towers but disapprove of eminent domain takings of private property that would allow the city to seize 100 apartments, 130 commercial units and a college, all of which city planners say is needed to achieve much of the specific development outlined in the application.

Rather than —

vote to recommend approval or rejection of the entire massive city application, or

vote individually on each of the application's 22 independent actions, or

vote to recommend disapproval unless certain aspects of the plan, like the eminent domain property takings, were removed.

—the board decided to cast just one vote on the Land Use committee's report.

BECAUSE THEY HAD to vote yes or no to a report that contained both approvals and disapprovals, board members were confused as to precisely what their vote would mean.

Following a brief discussion by board members about the plan, including traffic concerns and the need to fully study the implications of such a big build-out in conjunction with other developments around the area (many of them enumerated on a satellite photo of greater Downtown Brooklyn on the front pages of last week's Brooklyn Papers), the board voted 19-17, with three abstentions, in favor of adopting the committee's report.

But according to board rules, a majority of the board members in attendance is required to pass a resolution.

With 36 board members voting, three (Gloria Andrews, Edward Carter and Hemalet Patel) abstaining and one board member (Rachel Foster) actually ducking the vote — she hid in the hallway saying she felt pressured by the hundreds of vocal protesters, according to a source — there were 40 board members in attendance. Therefore, 21 votes were needed to adopt the committee report.

Thus, the committee's report was rejected.

Adding to the strange happenings, before the final tally was counted, Patel asked to change her vote from an abstention to an actual vote. Her request was shot down by CB2 Chairwoman Shirley McRae.

Foster did not return telephone messages left on her cell phone.

Irene Van Slyke, a longtime community board member, jumped up and took the microphone after the votes had been cast and McRae was still speaking.

"Now the borough president won't understand what this vote means," she said.

"We just weren't finished," said Van Slyke, who is opposed to most parts of the Downtown Plan.

She explained that a "yes" vote actually meant voting down eminent domain portions of the plan and several street demolitions that would make way for larger development sites.

LOCATED JUST BLOCKS from the proposed Atlantic Yards site where developer Bruce Ratner is looking to construct a \$2.5 billion residential and commercial village centered around a professional basketball arena to house his recently purchased New Jersey Nets, some of the approximately 400 protesters who packed the high school auditorium thought CB2 was actually voting on the arena plan.

Draped in American flags and armed with placards and balloons they cheered after it was announced that the board had failed to make a recommendation, thinking that meant they decided to not approve the arena plan. Others in attendance wanted the Downtown and arena plans considered together and still others were protesting the eminent domain portions of the Downtown Plan.

"There was a lot of misinformation," said McRae, explaining before the board adjourned that contrary to the belief of many, the board's vote had no bearing on the arena plan.

The plans which cover adjacent areas and whose impact on each other cannot be separated, are in fact linked physically, overlapping on the site at Atlantic

See SILENCE on page 14

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Purse-snatcher slips on ice patch

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

Mother nature had a way of intervening when two young thugs tried to steal a purse from a woman at the corner of 13th Street and Sixth Avenue at 7:14 pm on Jan. 27.

The victim, 27, was making her way home from Eighth Street when two teens ap-

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proached and asked what was inside her red pocketbook. Before she could answer, one thug pulled out a razor blade, cut the purse strap free, grabbed the bag and ran up Sixth Avenue along with his accomplice.

The woman gave chase, which paid off when one of the suspects slipped on a patch of ice at 12th Street and Seventh Avenue.

When the woman grabbed her bag back — minus \$11 — one of the attackers pleaded, "I'm sorry, give me the credit cards."

A Good Samaritan came to the woman's aid and the two cornered the teen snatchers at a nearby deli where police arrived and arrested the suspects, ages 13 and 15.

Charge car
After being dropped off by a car service at 15th Street and Seventh Avenue, a woman quickly realized she had left her purse behind.

No worries — she called the cell phone tucked away in the purse.

A man identifying himself as the driver of the car answered, police said, and he told the woman he had found the bag — wallet, cell phone and all — and agreed to leave it at the car service office.

The driver never showed up, but a slew of charges totaling more than \$1,200 did appear on the victim's credit card.

The incident occurred at 7 pm on Jan. 18.

Line stalker

A woman waiting on line at a check-cashing business at Fourth Avenue and St. Mark's Place didn't pay much notice when another customer on line turned to her and said, "It's cold outside."

In fact, the woman decided not to respond at all. When she took her cash and headed to a fast food restaurant just a few doors down, around 12:30 am, she noticed the man from the check-cashing line standing behind her.

When she left and walked to a neighboring deli the man approached her. "Do not scream or I'll shoot you," he said.

The woman screamed anyway and the man fled the deli with nothing, police said.

Slope is 'Driven'
Nissan may be one of Japan's largest carmakers, but in Park Slope they attract attention for another reason — if the headlights aren't being stolen, the entire car is.

This week, a pair of Nissans went missing from within the confines of the 78th Precinct.

A 24-year-old man parked his 1992 Nissan Sentra at 14th Street near Fifth Avenue at 7 pm on Jan. 24. But by noon the next day the car was missing.

A 1992 Nissan Maxima mysteriously disappeared this week from its parking spot on 15th Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues.

The 42-year-old owner said he parked his car at 8 pm on Jan. 27, but when he returned to fetch the car the next day, it was nowhere to be found.

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2nd (10am-Noon) — Screening
Blood Pressure
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9th (11am-1pm) — Screening
Body Fat Analysis
Advance Directives Information
Boro Park "Y"
4912 14th Ave., Bklyn.

23rd (12-30pm) — Lecture
"Heart Disease & Treatment"
Speaker: Mark Gorenstein, MD
St. Patrick's School Auditorium
97th St. & 4th Ave., Bklyn.

TUESDAY

10th (10am-Noon) — Screening
Blood Pressure/Glucose
Gellman lobby

10th (11am) — Lecture
"Heart Wisdom — Medication & Diet"
Speaker: Sandra Gordon, NP
AMCO Senior Center
5901 13th Ave., Bklyn.

WEDNESDAYS

4th (1-2pm) — Lecture
"Brain Aging"
Speaker: Roberto Maida, RN, MS, CCRN
Boro Park "Y"
4912 14th Ave., Bklyn.

11th (10am) — Lecture
"Secondary Risk Factors for Heart Disease"
Speaker: Robert Maltz, MD
Cardiac Rehab. & Exercise Program
4821 Fl. Hamilton Pkwy., Bklyn.

11th (10-30am) — Lecture
"Exercise & Your Heart"
Speaker: Alana Sarinco, Senior PT
Cardiac Rehab. & Exercise Program
4821 Fl. Hamilton Pkwy., Bklyn.

THURSDAYS

11th (11am) — Lecture
"Food Interaction with Medications"
Speaker: Nina Dahan
Cardiac Rehab. & Exercise Program
4821 Fl. Hamilton Pkwy., Bklyn.

11th (Noon) — Lecture
"Atrial Fibrillation & Minimally Invasive Surgery"
Speaker: Israel Jacobowitz, MD
St. Catherine's Church Basement
1033 41st St., Bklyn.

11th (1pm) — Lecture
"Food Labels — Low-Fat, Heart-Healthy Choices"
Speaker: Ruby Wernick, RD
Boro Park "Y"
4912 14th Ave., Bklyn.

18th (10am-3pm) — Screening
Blood Pressure/Glucose
Atlantic Shopping Mall
825 Atlantic Ave., Bklyn.
(btw. Atlantic & Flatbush Aves.)

18th (2pm) — Lecture
"Stress Reduction: Meditation & Relaxation Techniques"
Speaker: Linda Budziszewski, RN
Admin. Bldg. 2nd Floor Rm. 2C
(btw. Atlantic & Flatbush Aves.)

25th (9-10am) Student Lectures
"Smoking Cessation"
Speaker: Maria Jemella, Director
Respiratory Therapy
"Fast Foods & Your Heart"
Speaker: Ruby Wernick, RD
Pearlman S. 220
North Ave., Bklyn.
(btw. 49th & 50th Sts.)

25th (9-30-11-30am) — Screening
Blood Pressure/Glucose
United Senior Citizen of Sunset Park
475 52nd St., Bklyn.

25th (1pm) — Lecture
"Compulsive Heart Failure"
Speakers: Nutbert Moscovitch, MD,
Adrienne Barlow, NP
Boro Park "Y"
4912 14th Ave., Bklyn.

25th (6-7pm) — Screening
Blood Pressure
Gellman lobby

FRIDAYS

6th (10am-Noon) — Info. Session
Cardiac Rehab. & Exercise
Gellman lobby

6th (1-2pm) — Lecture
"Mature Women's Health Issues"
Speaker: Marcia Nelson, DO
"Women & Heart Disease"
Speaker: Roberto Maida, RN, MS, CCRN
YIMCA
Atlantic & 3rd Aves., Bklyn.

13th (10am) — Lecture
"Risk Factors & Coronary Heart Disease"
Speaker: Louis Teitelbaum, MD
Cardiac Rehab. & Exercise Program
4821 Fl. Hamilton Pkwy., Bklyn.

13th (10-30am) — Lecture
"Exercise & Your Heart"
Speaker: Alana Sarinco, Senior PT
Cardiac Rehab. & Exercise Program
4821 Fl. Hamilton Pkwy., Bklyn.

19th (11am) — Info. Session
"Medication"
Speaker: Bill Goldman, PharmD
Gellman 2 - Patient Lounge

19th (11-30am) — Info. Session
"Nutrition"
Speaker: Lori Levine
Gellman 2 - Patient Lounge

26th (1-15pm) — Lecture
"Arteriosclerosis & Coronary Heart Disease"
Speaker: Robert Berthelot, MD
Seaphardic Senior Center
485 Kings Highway, Bklyn.
(btw. E. 2nd St. & McDonald Ave.)

26th (2pm) — Lecture
"Heart Disease & Stroke"
Speaker: Roberto Maida, RN, MS, CCRN
Boro Park Library
1265 43rd St., Bklyn.
(btw. 12th & 13th Aves.)

22nd (11-30am) — Lecture
"Modern Coronary in Heart Disease"
Speaker: Paolo Desfiorio, MD
Castellammare Del Golfo
8746 25th Ave., Bklyn.
(btw. Bath & Benson Aves.)

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Slope loses its Blah Blah

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

As Valentine's Day approaches, and all thoughts turn to love, a Park Slope institution that has inspired more than its fair share has closed its doors for good.

The Blah Blah Lounge, tucked away on 11th street between Seventh and Eighth avenues, complete with its velvet decor that included fuzzy dice and handcuffs, shut down last month.

During its five years in business, romance bloomed, marriages were proposed, and make-out sessions graced the plush couches of the bar and lounge that served up its cocktails and tuna steaks alongside a roaring fireplace.

Owner Cosmo Lee closed down the nightclub, opting to travel the world instead.

The bar gained notoriety when it became one of the first smoke-free bars in the city years ahead of the much-maligned Bloomberg ban.

Coupled with customers' ability to breathe free in heady Park Slope, the will to woo was also inspired by the written word.

Pressed under the glass of the bar and illuminated from below, a collection of love letters penned in the 1950s by someone named Jim to a pretty blond named Claire Suddam, served as a reminder of the kind of romance that bloomed — *gasp!* — before



Blah Blah Lounge owner Cosmo Lee, in front of the love letters under glass that made his nightclub famous, closed one of the city's first smoke-free bars.

Roger Green pleads guilty

Associated Press

Fort Greene and Prospect Heights Assemblyman Roger Green pleaded guilty Thursday to three misdemeanor charges with

taking travel reimbursement from the state for expenses he never incurred.

Green, 54, pleaded guilty to one count of offering a false instrument for filing and two counts of petit larceny before

Judge William A. Carter. The head of the Legislature's Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, Green had previously acknowledged taking rides from Correctional Services Corp. in 2001 and 2002, but denied any

wrongdoing.

"What is it about you that makes me walk two feet off the ground?" Jim asks in one of the letters, written on the stationery of a long-defunct New Jersey magazine called *Sussex*.

Little is known about the couple, except what thousands of customers have read over the years.

Lee, a computer technician turned lounge operator, found the perfectly preserved and folded correspondences at a flea market in Lambertville, N.J., and placed about a third of them on display in the restaurant.

He kept the others stashed away at home. "They did encourage much love," said Lee, who is holding onto the collection even as he sells off the rest of the bar's eclectic furnishings.

For many, Blah Blah was more than just a neighborhood bar.

Over the years, couples who met at the lounge, and have since married, have returned to relive their encounter.

Craig Hammerman, district manager of Community Board 6 and a former candidate for City Council, said he would miss the place.

Hammerman was able to live out his deepest fantasies at several of the bar's open-mic nights. "They were ahead of their time when they opened five years ago, and I'm sorry to see them go," said Hammerman, who met Lee when he came to the community board to apply for a sidewalk cafe license a couple of years ago.

Blah Blah offered live music three nights a week including everything from country to jazz to pop music.

"It was my favorite place in Brooklyn," said Alicia Jones, a Web designer who lives just blocks from the shuttered bar.

"I met the owner once and he remembered my name."

But as the sole owner, Lee, who says he loves running a bar, found the business tied him down.

"Been there, done that, it's time to have a lifestyle change," Lee said when asked about his decision to close the place.

"When you're on your death bed and you want to take account of things that you accomplished, that's one of those things I'll be able to check off my list."

While Lee said he might consider opening another bar in the future, for now he's most interested in checking out watering holes outside the country.

Starting perhaps in Brazil, the Arkansas native said New Zealand was also high on his list.

But not everybody will miss Lee and his bar, a resident with his own penchant for the pen spray-painted the words "F--- Yuppies Scum!" on a next-door neighbor's fence that abutted the bar's outdoor seating area.

It wasn't the first time the lounge had been targeted by the teen, who was later caught and arrested, Lee said.

The yuppie-hating vandal might be happy to know that Lee, who owns the building, is now looking to rent the space to a doctor or lawyer.

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The Montauk Club
A Park Slope Landmark

If you are like me you have probably walked by 8th Avenue and Lincoln Place on occasion and wondered what the magnificent structure on the northeast corner housed. I did so for a couple of years before learning that it is the Montauk Club. Intrigued by its architectural beauty, I set about to learn more of the history of the club. In the process of doing so, I became a member. But, more on that later.

The Montauk Club was formed in 1888 by 25 Park Slope residents to promote "social relations among its members" the names of which shaped Brooklyn history such as Dean, Litchfield, Lefferts, Montgomery, Pratt, Schermerhorn, Underhill and Vanderbilt. The architect, Francis Kimball, borrowed the design from a Venetian palace built on the Grand Canal in the 15th century. The building featured four stories of the finest building details available under its Spanish tile roof including: balconies and loggias, stained glass, terra cotta accents and friezes carved to depict the once local Montauk tribe as well as one of the founders themselves laying the cornerstone. Such beauty and distinction earned the building landmark status in 1974.

On the inside, the club made liberal use of mahogany decor in its spacious rooms with high ceilings that included marble fireplaces in every room. Sparring no expense in the construction, the founders installed an elevator, four bowling lanes, billiard and card tables, a restaurant and bar. The club was completed in 1891 at a cost of \$230,000. Over the next century the club hosted Presidents Cleveland, Taft, McKinley and

Eisenhower while recognizing senators and governors as club members.

Today, the Montauk Club is a more modest reflection of the once grand old days of yesterday. The membership has met many challenges over the past century and managed to preserve a worthy institution. In addition to the regular schedule of member dining and social events, the club continues to offer an exceptional venue for weddings, bar mitzvahs, club and civic group meetings, even an occasional movie show.

As for me, we were drawn to the Montauk Club for the family fun of it. The club provides us with a social evening of dining with our boys who can and do go their own way to movies on the wide screen TV or billiards or just being boys with some friends. In addition, the club organizes Halloween and other holiday events for families. Of course, having all this available in a landmark building so rich in history and esthetic beauty is just a big bonus.

— Michael Callahan

We invite you to join the Montauk Club. Be a part of History! Call (718) 638-0800.



Jump for joy

A figure skater gets some air — very cold air — while practicing at the Wollman Rink in Prospect Park recently.

New Downtown will be filled by corporate welfare

To the editor:

Kudo's for your balance coverage. I submit the following for your consideration:

Since Mr. Ratner plans to add 2.4 million square feet of office and retail space to the new, improved, expanded and geographically puzzling Downtown Brooklyn (when did that happen? Why did I never notice how long the walk was from Dean Street down to Fulton Street?) it is instructive to see to what ends he and the city had to go to keep Bear Stearns at Metrotech last year, when they made the 20-year deal that will keep 1,500 of its employees there.

After demanding city incentives enabling Bear Stearns to relocate to Lower Manhattan, they had already received as much as \$111 million in public largesse in two separate packages — \$36 million in 1991 and \$75 million in 1997.

This latest giveaway involved \$48 million from unused sales tax breaks that Bear Stearns got as part of its incentives for first moving the operation to Brooklyn in 1991, and was shifted into property tax exemptions, which were another component in Bear Stearns' 1997 subsidy package.

In this case, the Bloomberg administration stood firm in limiting the level of corporate extortion, and Mr. Ratner publicly acknowledged the mayor's role in keeping those 1,500 jobs in New York. [Deputy Mayor Dan] Doctoroff said, "The era of handouts to get companies to stay in the city is nearing an end."

Develop, don't destroy.
—Lee Rubenstein, Prospect Heights

LETTERS

To the editor:

I write regarding the letter by Borough President Marty Markowitz in last week's edition, "Markowitz: Hagan's got some chutzpah."

I am disgusted by the manner in which Mr. Markowitz wrote about Patti and Schellie Hagan. Just because he made a campaign pledge to bring a major sports team and arena to Brooklyn doesn't mean that they don't have the right to oppose it. These women, who are my neighbors in Prospect Heights, are fighting for all of us who will be displaced should the stadium project go forward.

My husband and I own one of the businesses on Dean Street that Bruce Ratner is trying to snatch using eminent domain. We manufacture fine painting supports for artists, conservators and museums worldwide, and hardly consider our commercial space "blighted."

I would say that Mr. Ratner and the rest of his governmental supporters, Governor Pataki, Mayor Bloomberg, Mr. Markowitz and Senator Schumer are the ones with "chutzpah" for ignoring some of the very constituents who voted for them.

Those of us in jeopardy will not give up our homes or our businesses so that one greedy developer can snatch private land and use it for his own benefit.

—Susan Goldberg, Prospect Heights

Send us a letter

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• By e-mail: Newspapers@BrooklynPapers.com

All letters must be signed and include the writer's home address and phone number (only the writer's neighborhood and street name are published with the letter).
Letters may be edited and will not be returned.

Wealth of new info sheds light on Nazis

By Larry Neumeister
Associated Press

With their newly disclosed stories expanding knowledge of World War II atrocities, some 1,778 survivors of Nazi medical experiments were sent checks Monday from the proceeds of Holocaust lawsuits.

The \$5,400 payouts are considered symbolic by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany.

But the conference hopes the new information will promote further research on the experiments — one of the less-discussed aspects of the Holocaust. It sent letters to survivors asking permission to release their statements anonymously to Holocaust museums.

"Sixty years after the fact, you're suddenly piecing together history," Gideon Taylor, the conference's executive vice president, said after the new claims were announced at a press conference Monday.

Taylor said attorneys who filed lawsuits seeking reparations for Holocaust survivors never imagined that so many people would provide information about medical experiments.

In all, people from 33 different countries responded, describing experiments of a magnitude not previously known.

Greg Schneider, chief operating officer of the conference, said two of six people handling claims by Nazi experiment survivors had to quit because "they just couldn't handle how emotional it was."

The staff has compiled a list of experiments conducted in more than 30 concentration camps and ghettos from 1942 through 1945. The large majority were known from prior research, books, camp archives and claimants to a 1951 fund.

But more than a dozen have been added based on the 1,778 submissions. The new statements show torture-like experiments were more widely practiced than previously known, conference leaders said.

The list mentions the already well-known Dr. Josef Mengele experiments on twins and dwarfs. It also identifies experiments involving sterilization, injection of infectious diseases and poisons, injections to try to change the color of people's eyes, unnecessary amputations and organ removals. Some procedures were done without anesthesia.

"It's unbelievable so many are alive and they were courageous enough to come forward," said Eli Zborowski, chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem and a Jew who survived World War II hidden by non-Jews in Poland.

"This is the least available, documented part of the Holocaust," he said.

Zborowski said some questions still need to be answered — such as how the experiment program could develop among highly educated doctors, and where and when the experiments began.

Zborowski said he believed the doctors were recruited gradually as Jews were dehumanized in a process that began with discrimination and evolved into the murder of millions.

Choosing your child's pre-school

Q: It's time to register for preschool. I've chosen one that my friends recommended, but I'm not sure whether it will be a good fit for my 3-year-old son. —a mother

A: If your son is assigned nurturing teachers and the school's philosophy is "children learn through play," you're off to a good start.

"Preschoolers are wigglers and doers," says Alan Simpson, communications director of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. "They need activities that engage them."

Research shows that young children learn best through manipulation of materials and age-appropriate hands-on experiences, Simpson says.

In a high-quality preschool, learning is embedded in activities that engage the senses," he says. "It's crucial for programs to recognize that preschoolers are not high school students."

Sandra Heidemann, an early childhood specialist, agrees the best early childhood programs use play to get at academics. One doesn't rule out the other. "I worry people are cutting back on playtime," she says.

Parent-to-Parent

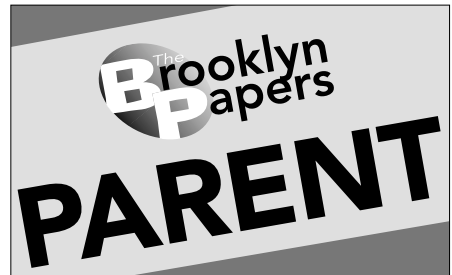


By Betty Flinger

"What kids learn through play is phenomenal."

For example, children learn problem-solving, how to enter a group and work on their language skills as they pretend, says Heidemann, co-author of "Pathways to Play: Developing Play Skills in Young Children" (Redleaf Press, 1992), a book geared toward teachers.

A lion puppet used during reading time motivates kids to learn as they act out animal



sounds. Alphabet puzzle pieces let a child feel the shapes of the letters. Finger paints provide a calm way for a child to form letters, smear the work and start over. Kids build math skills with blocks.

If your child's teachers offer fun activities that engage him and work with you as a team, you've probably found a good match. When learning is through play, there is no right or wrong answer.

Age 3 or 4 is far too young to be told you're failing at something," Simpson says.

When you observe a classroom, you should see several clearly divided learning centers: a special table full of water, rice or grits where kids can measure, sift and pour; an art station; an area for play-dough; a table for matching games, puzzles and stringing beads; a working table; a block area; a housekeeping center; and a quiet reading corner.

Ask about the class schedule. How much time do the kids get to "work" in all the stations? What about play ground time?

One mother moved her 4-

year-old out of his preschool and put him on the waiting list at another one, partly because he could not adjust to the rigid way that transitions were handled, and he was upset that he rarely got to finish what he was doing in a center before it was time to move.

"The more we learn, the more we realize children can accomplish in the early years," Simpson says. "Then we create settings that defeat curiosity for learning just as it is beginning to develop."

If a program is rigid and a child is acting out, it may not be the best place for him. Simpson and Heidemann agree. For example, one Parent to Parent reader says that her 4-year-old son gets frustrated and lashes out at his teachers during daily workbook and journal times, and has outbursts when it's time to move to a different task.

In an evaluation of a preschool, Simpson says, teacher training, the ratio of teachers to students, the turnover rate of teachers, the size of the groups, and the health and safety of the program, are all important to look at.

Other concerns are more difficult to measure: Does the class feel warm and inviting? How do the teachers strengthen social and emotional skills within the class?

Can you help?

My husband and I recently moved next door to a family with two children, a boy, 3, and a girl, 8. They all play, unsupervised, in their driveway and in a common yard area between our houses. The girl's friend often bullies the boy often and his sister goes along with it.

My home-office window overlooks their play area, and I've seen the girls push the boy down, smack him on the face, pull his pants down and spank him, and drag him around. The mother doesn't respond to the boy's screams.

My husband says they're just 'kids being kids,' but my heart breaks for the boy.

Should I talk to my neighbor, confront the children myself or do nothing?" —reader

If you have tips or a question, call our toll-free hotline any time at (800) 827-1092 or e-mail us at p2p@att.net.

Share and share alike

Kids are pros at playing one parent off the other. However, many couples with kids are getting wise to this ploy and are standing firm, at least according to a recent Mars Venus-Readbook poll.

Of the 883 female poll participants, 42.3 claim to be in sync with their spouses when it comes to disciplining their children. Another 33.1 percent, however, claim that they take the lead in controlling the kids, while 11.6 percent let their husband be the tough guy.

For 13 percent of lucky kids, both parents are sofies.

Full poll results are shown below. To take part in this week's Mars Venus-Readbook Poll, log on to www.marsvenusreadbook.com

Who do your kids listen to?

Me, I'm the disciplinarian. — 33.1 percent
My husband, because I'm a sofie. — 11.6 percent

Both of us. — 42.3 percent
Neither of us. — 13.0 percent

Total votes: 884

NOTE: Because poll percentages are rounded, total values may not work out to 100 percent. Poll results are not scientific and reflect only the opinions of those users who choose to partake.

Dear John:

Why do some in-laws meddle in their children's relationships?

Dear Privacy Deprived:

Moms and dads get involved because of the love they have for their children. When their child comes to them with a relationship problem, sometimes parents forget that they are only hearing one side of the story and responding accordingly. Even when the adult child has resolved the issue, the parents may not be aware of this, and so they may still resent the spouse's actions.

For this reason, I implore couples to work out their issues with each other first or with an unbiased mediator. If the issues are big enough, preferably that person would be a professional counselor. Together, the couple should work out boundaries for parental involvement, then let their parents know the ground rules, and keep their commitment to each other to hold to these rules of fair play.

Dear John:

My fiancée is the greatest. We have, however, had our share of fights, usually when she gets really jealous and feels that I look at other women. I tell her that they mean nothing to me, but I don't think she believes me, so how do I convince her?

— Couple in Calamity

Dear Couple in Calamity:

From what you say, these insecurities are drawn from your actions — even if you don't mean to give the impression that you are interested in others. Many guys don't realize it, but sometimes they have a tendency to stare at particularly pretty women.

In the future, when the two of you are together in public, give her your full attention. This is the perfect time to demonstrate small acts of kindness, such as pulling out her chair or opening the door before she walks through. When she is at your side, put her arm or her back, or give her a reassuring kiss on the cheek. Actions speak louder than words, so don't just tell her, but demonstrate your love, and all her insecurities will begin to fall away.

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BHA has wish list for Montague

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

Brooklyn Heights may be among the city's most charming neighborhoods, a village unto its own with historic brownstones, tree-lined streets, a sense of community, and sweeping vistas of Manhattan.

But for all that charm, many residents complain that the neighborhood's main commercial strip — Montague Street — is becoming increasingly drab.

Over the years small mom-and-pop shops have closed their doors to make way for bigger retail chain stores stripping much of the character of the street between Court Street and the promenade, says the leader of the neighborhood's civic association.

"We want to get beyond the sameness," said Judy Stanton, executive director of the Brooklyn Heights Association, which recently issued a list of guidelines for what kinds of stores the neighborhood group would like to attract to the area.

While Montague Street caters to residents — predominantly high-income professionals — businesses on Montague Street are largely



Passersby stroll down Montague Street in front of the Gap clothing store. The Brooklyn Heights Association would like to see more specialty shops on the strip.

dependent upon lunchtime traffic from the courts and Downtown Brooklyn offices in order to meet their increasingly higher rents.

Relying on a recent study from the Montague Street Business Improvement District (BID) in tandem with advice from local realtors, the

BHA is reaching out to area real estate brokers and asking them to look for shops specializing in fine gifts, housewares, athletic apparel and men's and children's shops.

And the BHA wants them to stay away from drugstores, banks, cell phone stores, dry cleaners and beauty salons,

which already saturate the strip, according to the study. News of an Eckerd drugstore possibly opening in the long-vacant Montague Mews mini-mall at Henry Street, along with the closing of three longtime businesses, motivated the organization to push ahead with recommendations for the strip.

Until just two decades ago, Montague Street was made up almost entirely of small independently owned businesses.

When a Burger King fast-food restaurant opened in the space near Henry Street that is currently occupied by Banana Republic back in the early 1980s, said Stanton, it was among the first major chains to hit the street.

And the community had their opinion heard loud and clear. Following a resident-led boycott, the store closed down after just two years.

Now there is no shortage of major chain stores including Banana Republic, GAP, MAC cosmetics, Aerosoles, Nine West, Verizon, Pearl Vision, Sprint, Starbucks, Jennifer Convertibles, Sleepy's, Radio Shack, Super Cuts, Rite Aid, Hallmark, Duane Reade and Cohen's Fashion Optical.

Part of the problem of attracting small boutiques and destination restaurants with well-reviewed chefs — like the ones clustered around Smith and Court streets — is the cost of leases on Montague Street.

"It's a tough situation," said Bill Ross, owner of William S. Ross Real Estate on Montague Street.

Commercial real estate prices are nearly double on Montague Street compared to Smith Street.

While space goes for \$100 a square foot on Montague Street, (an average store of 1,600 square feet fetches \$160,000 annually, said Ross) commercial space goes for about \$50 a square foot on Smith Street and \$40 on Court Street in Cobble Hill, Ross said.

Two years ago, the BID conducted a survey of more than 400 residents, she said, and they make that information available to potential store owners thinking about coming in to the area.

"It's all good suggestions," said Ross, "but in reality it's not that easy to bring everybody's wish list to the street."

Part of the problem, said Ross, is that Montague Street property owners pay dramatically higher property taxes, which inevitably get tacked on to their tenants' rent.

Ross said he would take the BHA's recommendations to heart when looking for new tenants.

"Before they even came out with the list my office was very careful about who we would show things to on Montague Street," said Ross, who brokered the deal for the Garden of Eden supermarket at 180 Montague St. amid the bankers' row between Court and Clinton streets.

"I love Burger King," added Ross, "I just don't think it belongs here."

Valerie Lynch, executive director of the Montague Street BID, estimated that less than 15 percent of the street's approximately 100 businesses are national chain stores.

"We would like to see more independently owned type boutiques," Lynch said, but added, "There's not very much we can do."

Two years ago, the BID conducted a survey of more than 400 residents, she said, and they make that information available to potential store owners thinking about coming in to the area.

"It's all good suggestions," said Ross, "but in reality it's not that easy to bring everybody's wish list to the street."

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Cops of the month

During "Cop of the Month" ceremonies at the 78th Precinct are (from left) Pauline Blake, president of the precinct community council; Officer Julio Franco; Officer William Hogan; Officer David Wall; Deputy Inspector Edward Mullen, commanding officer; and Capt. Elias Nikas, executive officer.

ADVERTISER FOCUS

High tech, low prices and creative thinking at Lucy's Car Wash

Anthony Pezzo, of Lucy's Car Wash, Seventh Avenue and 19th Street, is not your typical car wash owner. But then, Lucy's is not typical, either.

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How about a 48-hour, clean-car guarantee? Pezzo says customers should come back for a free car wash if their car gets dirty for any reason within 48 hours of being cleaned at his location. No questions asked!

In addition, take \$1 off on Mondays if you have a two-door car. Seniors save a buck on Tuesdays, ladies on Wednesdays, men on Thursdays, and four-door cars on Fridays. Taxis and limos get a discount any day of the week.

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will head up for 30 days, or Simoniz pays," is the motto at Lucy's, which is the only Brooklyn location offering a 30-day guarantee.

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The car wash is open daily from 7 am until 11 pm, filled with impeccably dressed attendants in bowties, in a safe, well-lit atmosphere.

Where did all these innovative, customer-driven ideas come from? Pezzo tries to look shy when you ask. He was nominated entrepreneur of the year by Mass Mutual. Pezzo is also the instructor for the Learning Annex course "How to Open and Run a Car Wash," and hopes to franchise Lucy's as a chain across the New York region.

So who is Lucy, you may ask? We did, and found it was the name of a partner's wife, Pezzo says. "We wanted a name that everyone would remember. And it works; we love Lucy!"

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City's Red Hook piers message is mixed

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

As the fate of the Red Hook waterfront hangs in limbo pending a study commissioned by the city and Port Authority, the city announced this week that it would put up \$250 million to ready five piers in Manhattan and Brooklyn for luxury liners.

After three years of negotiations, the city also offered Pier 7, just off Atlantic Avenue, to Carnival Cruise Lines as a temporary port. But Carnival officials said the temporary offer wasn't good enough and they want a top-notch permanent home for their star luxury liner, the Queen Mary 2, which is too big to dock at the West Side Passenger Terminal in Manhattan.

"The cruise ship industry brings millions of dollars and thousands of jobs to New York City," said City Councilman David Yassky, chairman of the council's Waterfront Committee, who says the cruise ship dock at Pier 7 could mean 1,600 new jobs at the end of April.

American Stevedoring and the Red Hook piers have been caught in a battle for months between supporters of housing and other commercial uses along the waterfront and those



A ship is unloaded by workers for American Stevedoring on the Red Hook piers.

who want to see maritime uses continue. To determine the best possible use for the piers, the Port Authority and the city Economic Development Corporation hired the consulting firm of Hamilton, Rabinowitz & Alschuler (HRA&A).

At a series of public hearings, advocates for everything from affordable housing to luxury condominiums to continued maritime use have come to bat for their causes.

The final HRA&A study was to be released last month, but EDC officials said they were still adding the final touches. A Port Authority spokesman said the findings would be released.

With the study still pending, Mayor Michael Bloomberg

publicly pledged his support of maintaining a "working waterfront" while speaking at the Eileen Dugan Senior Center on Court Street in Carroll Gardens last month.

"I support that," Bloomberg said, when asked about American Stevedoring and keeping a working waterfront. But when asked to clarify what he meant by "working waterfront," Bloomberg spokesman Jordan Barowitz told The Brooklyn Papers, "I thought he was talking about Carnival Cruise Lines."

"The administration is committed to jobs in that area, that includes industrial jobs — and part of that area will remain industrial," said EDC spokeswoman Janet Patterson.

In the meantime, Red Hook businesses and residents are

anxiously waiting. "The more uncertainty the worst for investment," said Phaedra Thomas, director of the Red Hook and Gowanus programs for the South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation. "Businesses need to know what their future is going to be in the area in order to forecast growth and whether or not they should be invested in growing their businesses in the community."

Operators of American Stevedoring, the only working container port in Brooklyn, just hope that the city hurries up and makes a decision before it is time for them to pack up and move out.

"What's being played out is a very public game of hardball," said American Stevedoring spokesman Matt Yates.

Once a foe, homeless now a tool in anti-arena fight

By Deborah Kolben
The Brooklyn Papers

There are currently 38,574 homeless people living in New York City and 400 of them are at the center of a debate raging in Prospect Heights.

Just a year and a half ago residents formed the Prospect Heights Action Coalition to protest the conversion of two neighborhood buildings into back-to-back, for-profit homeless shelters at 768 Pacific St. and 603 Dean St.

But now the group is fighting to keep the 93-unit shelter open as real estate developer Bruce Ratner is trying to knock them down to make way for his \$2.5 billion residential and retail village centered around a 19,000 seat arena to house his newly purchased New Jersey Nets.

The plan would require the taking of approximately 70 buildings by eminent domain, the power of the state to seize private property for public benefit.

But that number includes the 400 residents of the homeless shelter. "[They] are using the homeless they fought so hard to keep out of Prospect Heights to pad the number of individuals they claim will be forced to move," Borough President Marty Markowitz wrote in a letter to The Brooklyn Papers.

Markowitz, an ardent backer of Ratner's Development, who contacted Ratner more than a year ago to talk about bringing a professional sports team to Brooklyn, has been butting heads with PHAC for months.

Asked about "padding" the numbers, Hagan said the families had been living in the facilities for almost a year, longer than some of the residents in two new, recently converted condominium buildings.

"According to law, if you have been in a place for 30 days you have tenancy rights, you are a resident," said Hagan. "Is Marty Markowitz trying to say that these people do not exist?"



This homeless shelter at 768 Pacific St., and another at 603 Dean St., will be evicted by the construction of a New Jersey Nets arena.

Many of the families live in the shelter for up to a year, according to Jim Anderson, a spokesman for the Department of Homeless Services.

The shelters are operated by Interim Housing Inc., a for-profit offshoot of Praxair Housing Initiatives, which has come under fire for alleged misuse of funds including posting \$5,000 bail for a Latin Kings gang leader and charging hundreds of dollars in personal items.

The city Department of Homeless Services pays approximately \$3,000 per

month — or \$90 per night — for each family living in the facility.

When the shelters opened in the area, opponents joined then-Councilman James Davis — who was assassinated last summer in City Hall by a crazed political rival — in protest.

Victor Salsa, director of social services for the Prospect Heights shelter, referred all calls to homeless shelter spokesman James Capalino.

Capalino did not return several calls seeking comment.

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The Brooklyn Papers' essential guide to the Borough of Kings

February 7, 2004



Culture clubhouse: (From far left) At the "Japan and Nature" exhibit at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, children share a Japanese meal with life-like foods; a kid tries on a fox mask; and Olivia Guerrieri, 8, models a cotton yukata.

Seasons greetings

Rediscover the four seasons thru Japanese kids' ideas and artifacts

By Lisa J. Curtis
GO Brooklyn Editor

If you've lost that naive rapture at the sight of snow and ice, it's time to take your child—or borrow a niece or nephew—to visit an exhibition that celebrates the best aspects of winter, spring, summer and fall: the Brooklyn Children's Museum's "Japan and Nature: Spirits of the Seasons" exhibit.

On display in the lower level of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Steinhardt Conservatory, the installation of objects, activities, videos, games and more will make both children and adults appreciate nature's charms in a whole new way.

By interviewing Japanese children about their favorite aspects of the four seasons, and their holidays and traditions, and incorporating artifacts provided by the children as well as the Newark Museum and the Brooklyn Children's Museum, exhibition developers Elizabeth Rawson and Emily Timmel have created much more than an exhibit. "Japan and Nature" is an environment where American children and adults can re-discover the seasons through the unique perspective of the Japanese—although Rawson said the exhibit's target audience is ages 4 through 11.

The winter section has a heated table typical of homes in the city of Sapporo, on the northernmost island of Japan, where children can kneel and share a meal of tea and faux sushi; learn how to hold chopsticks; watch a video of an elaborate ice festival in Japan; make New Year's cards; and create a display in an alcove, a *tokonoma*, with scrolls and a plum blossom, a flower that signifies that spring is not far behind.

Japanese children start school in the spring, so that area of the exhibit is where you'll find a classroom where children can practice brush painting Japanese words and watch a short video of an elementary class learning how to tend to animals and plant rice, an integral part of the Japanese curriculum.

While American kids might sing, "Rain, rain, go away, come again some other day," Japanese kids have their own version of the song, which can be heard in the exhibit, and *teru teru bōzu* dolls, made to wish rain away, are on display. They can raise a carp wind-

EXHIBIT

"Japan and Nature: Spirits of the Seasons" will be on display at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Steinhardt Conservatory, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway in Prospect Heights, through June 6. Pick up timed exhibit tickets, free with garden admission, at the Visitor's Center. Admission is \$5 for adults 16 and older; \$3 for adults 65 and older and students with valid IDs; and free for children under 16.

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden's hours, October through March, are Tuesday through Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm, and Saturday, Sunday and holidays, 10 am to 4:30 pm. Closed Mondays, except on public holidays. Events related to the exhibit will take place at the Botanic Garden and at the Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Mark's Avenue in Crown Heights, through the run of the exhibition. For more information visit their Web sites at www.bbg.org and www.brooklynkids.org, or call the hotline at (718) 623-7380.

sock in honor of Children's Day, "which represents strength and courage because the fish swim against the current," explained Timmel. Kids can also enjoy spring in Fukuoaka, the largest city on the island of Kyushu, by spreading a blanket beneath a stylized cherry

tree and having a picnic with a cooler-full of supplies.

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden is famed for its annual cherry blossom festival, which culminates with a weekend straining at the seams with activities ranging from flower arranging to concerts. (This year the festival will be held May 1-2.)

Children can don cotton yukatas, according to the exhibit instructions, which are decorated with flowers, and marvel at the doll display featuring elaborate *hinu* dolls that are passed down from mother to daughter, or the warrior dolls in the Children's Day display.

In the summer area, a tent is set up near backdrops of Lake Biwa, Japan's largest and deepest lake, which is a popular recreation area. Children can try their hand at catch-and-release fishing with soft, sculptured fish and enjoy the ancient Japanese hobby of bug collecting by going on an insect scavenger hunt and making rubbings of their findings. (One of the curators pointed out a box of beetle food sent to the museum by a Japanese child.)

"The activities and things emphasized here are based on research with kids in Japan,"

said Rawson. "This is what's important for kids here to know about them. That's what makes this exhibit so special."

It wouldn't be a vacation without a snapshot, so children can pose in front of several different backdrops featuring views around Lake Biwa.

In the fall area, visitors will recognize the *torii*, the large vermilion structure that is also in the Botanic Garden's 90-year-old, outdoor Japanese Hill and Pond Garden. The *torii* signifies that a shrine is near. In the exhibit the shrine, Kyoto's Fushimi Inari, is evoked by a mural and steps. Nearby, children can write their prayers and wishes on paper and hang them on a wall, just as is done at the shrine. Kids can also play with fox puppets or wear fox masks whose mythical significance is explained in books in the exhibit.

Children can also wear the jackets and headbands worn in the harvest festival—which can be watched on a monitor—and bang on the festival drums.

The exhibit is decorated with haikus and has a globe and an interactive station where the viewer can see Japan from above and zoom in on the regions explored in the exhibit.

"Japan and Nature," produced by the Brooklyn Children's Museum with a \$750,000 grant from the Freeman Foundation Asian Exhibit Initiative, closes June 6 and will travel from Maine to Hawaii on its tour of the 10 member institutions of the Association of Children's Museums.

Throughout the Brooklyn run of the exhibit, both the Children's Museum and Botanic Garden will have activities related to the exhibit at their institutions. Among the complementary activities planned for the exhibit will be a *shodo*, or calligraphy, workshop at the Children's Museum on Feb. 14, from 3 pm to 5 pm, and at the Botanic Garden on Feb. 15, from 1 pm to 3 pm.

By organizing the exhibit around universal aspects of childhood—family, school, play and holiday celebrations—"Japan and Nature" makes it possible to appreciate the common ground between American and Japanese youth—even encouraging the study of natural science—and it's also a gentle reminder to enjoy the beauty each season brings.

CINEMA



Schmlevis lives

The Jewish Executive Learning Annex will kick off its Brooklyn Heights Jewish International Film Festival on Feb. 7 with the 2001 Canadian film, "Schmlevis: In Search of Elvis Presley's Jewish Roots."

This utterly unpredictable documentary by writer-director producer Max Wallace claims to be a journalistic endeavor to make the case for Elvis' ties to Judaism. Instead, it becomes clear that this behind-the-scenes film is helmed by a band of directionless filmmakers intent on a road trip to Graceland with an Orthodox Jewish Elvis impersonator, Schmlevis, in tow.

While they make half-hearted attempts at their research (they wander around a cemetery, looking for the grave of Elvis' Jewish great-great-grandmother but don't seem to know for sure if she's even buried there), and when the infighting overcomes them, they run off to the unlikely destination, Israel, for clues.

"Schmlevis" is at times Woody Allen-esque (the filmmakers practically taunt the southerners and then dejectedly admit, to humorous effect, that they can't elicit any anti-Semitic responses) but more so like "Project Greenlight," HBO's reality series filming the unpleasant quarreling of self-righteous novices attempting to make a movie. On camera, a filmmaker actually hits up his Aunt Pearl for money to make the movie by bribing her with a paper bag full of chocolate bars.

But the film is worth it for those few and far between comic moments, like the visit to the unsuspecting Auntie. And when the anti-Semitism does rear its ugly head, it's an unwarranted, deeply affecting surprise not provoked by either Schmlevis or his cohorts.

Although Schmlevis often ran from opportunities to perform in the documentary, there will be a post-film concert and dialogue with the yarmulke-wearing crowd. The screening is free and begins at 8 pm at the Jewish Executive Learning Annex in B'nai Avraham, 117 Remsen St. in Brooklyn Heights. Reservations are necessary. Call (718) 596-4840 ext. 15.

—Lisa J. Curtis

DANCE

Hot stuff

Flamenco Vivo! Carlotas Santana will perform their potent concoction of flamenco music and dance at Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College on Feb. 7, at 8 pm.

Singers Aurora Reyes and Jose Salinas will join guitarists Calvin Hazen and Basilio Georges to form a galvanizing, rhythmic backdrop for the six dancers performing this special, 20th anniversary program.

Artistic Director Carlotas Santana told GO Brooklyn this week that her company distinguishes itself from other flamenco companies, in part, because while traditional flamenco dances are about certain feelings or moods, "We do a lot of theme-based works, works with a story line. The one piece we're bringing to Brooklyn Center that is theme-based was choreographed in 1986 by my partner and co-founder of the company, Roberto Lorca.

"[Luz y Sombra] is a piece about the light side of life and the dark side of life, which he choreographed when he was diagnosed with AIDS," said Santana. "Initially it is bright and fun, a couple in love, and then enters a figure in flamenco folklore, a very sexy woman who breaks men's hearts. In this piece, it's the angel of death and there is a fight between the male dancer and the angel of death. He set this when he was diagnosed with AIDS and was working through his own death."

Lorca died in 1987, but his legacy is evident in the first half of the Flamenco Vivo program, which features dances from the early '80s, when the company started.

The program's second half is much more modern choreography, said Santana. It will include excerpts from "Ballet de la Vuelta," a new work choreographed last year by Flamenco Vivo member Antonio Hidalgo, with music by Calvin Hazen and Fernando de la Rúa. The title means "Comings and Goings," she explained.

"These dances are influenced from the migrations from Spain to Latin America and back to Spain, that have been happening since the time of Columbus," said Santana. This work has lighter music and will include "Columbianism," the Argentinean-influenced "Milonga" (featuring Santana) and the Cuban "Guajira."

Because flamenco is a particularly emotive art form, Santana said the audience is encouraged to applaud when they feel moved to—they don't have to wait until the end of a piece, and the occasional shout of "¡olé!" is appreciated, too.

The performance will take place at Brooklyn College's Walt Whitman Theater, one block from the junction of Flatbush and Nostrand avenues, in Midwood. Tickets are \$30. For more information, call (718) 951-4500 or visit www.brooklyn-center.com.

—Lisa J. Curtis



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ADVERTISER GUIDE

Alicia's Cafe & Eatery

10 Columbia Pl. at Joralemon Street, (718) 532-0069 (DC, Disc, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$13-\$17.

Owner Wayne Anderson opened Alicia's, on charming, residential Columbia Place in Brooklyn Heights, in October 2001. It's worth the trip off the beaten track, to get to Chef Sebastian Chou's French-Thai-American menu.

"It's an eclectic menu, but we're French in terms of our sauces and presentation," explained Anderson. Among the temptations on Chou's menu are roasted lamb loin with thyme flowers, sugar snap and gratin dauphinoise (roasted potatoes with your cream and garlic), and grilled salmon and jumbo shrimp with steamed vegetable in a saffron broth. The cavalloni stuffed with asparagus and crabmeat in a shrimp sauce is a memorable starter.

Come back for brunch to try the pancake Napoleon: pancakes layered with warm fruit, whipped cream and served with rum-butter sauce.

Open for lunch Monday through Friday, dinner Tuesday through Sunday and weekend brunch from 10 am to 4 pm.

Alma
187 Columbia St. at Degraw Street, (718) 643-5400, www.almarestaurant.com (AmEx, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$11-\$18.

While the authentic, "non-Americanized" Mexican food by Alma Chef Gary Jacobson — in the Columbia Street Waterfront District — is a gem, it is the setting that will take your breath away. Dine in the rooftop garden, which seats 40, and you'll have Manhattan's skyline at your fingertips. Indoor seating is also available, and the comfortable, rustic dining room with its wood interior, handmade chairs and hand-blown glass lamps also help make Alma a popular destination. The tandoor has been called the finest in the city, handmade daily in a dazzling variety. Anchovy relish, a large poblano pepper stuffed with shredded beef, naris and peppers is a classic.

Blue Apron Foods
814 Union St. at Seventh Avenue, (718) 230-3180, (MC, V)

Park Slope resident Ted Matern and former Park Slope resident Alan Palmer opened this scrumptious cheese and charcuterie restaurant in November 2002. With 60 years of combined experience in the gourmet food business — including Dean & DeLuca and Bloomingdale's — the owners have made Blue Apron Foods a destination for foodies who prize high-quality goods, moderate prices and top-notch service. Blue Apron also sells all of those must-have packaged foods that make for elegant access.

Cono & Sons O'Pescatore

301 Graham Ave. at Ainslie Street, (718) 388-0166, www.conosons.com (AmEx, DC, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$8.95-\$29.95.

Your first impression of Cono & Sons O'Pescatore in Williamsburg will be one of elegance, evoked by crisp, white tablecloths, black, lacquered chairs and a beautiful tile floor. As the name suggests, this is a place for serious seafood and Italian cuisine enthusiasts.

Chef Cono Natale's signature dishes include the Conadina, a mouthwatering mixture of veal, sausage, beef and chicken, prepared with peppers, mushrooms and potatoes \$39.99 for two or more; and the torpedo di pesce — clams, shrimp, mussels, whiting, squid and fllet of sole served with rice (also \$39.95 for at least two people). There's something for everyone: homemade cavatelli, veal chops alla Cono, shrimp fra diavolo and fried scallops. Capuccino and a traditional Italian dessert (cheesecake, spumoni and more) ensure a happy ending. Open daily for lunch and dinner.

Cucina

256 19th Ave. at Carroll Street, (718) 230-0711, www.cucinarestaurant.com (AmEx, DC, Disc, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$14-\$27.

Appetizers have been named one of New York's top 50 restaurants in Zagat's, and named "one of the finest Italian restaurants in the city" by Time Out New York. But anyone who lives in Brooklyn knows that. What is new is that Cucina chef Michael Fiore has taken control of the contemporary Italian kitchen, offering delicious pastas, grilled pizzas and variety of antipasti. Cucina also offers valet parking on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and a tabouret menu.

Gage & Tollner

372 Fulton St. at Jay Street, (718) 875-5181, www.GageandTollner.com (AmEx, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$14.95-\$29.95.

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Heart beats Chef Michael Fiore of Cucina restaurant in Park Slope will offer lobster-filled, heart-shaped ravioli, made from beet pasta, with a butter and herb salad.

Downtown Brooklyn's Gage & Tollner, an atmospheric Brooklyn landmark that dates back to 1879, features arched mirrors, red velvet wallpaper and brass, gas-fix chandeliers. Restaurant Joseph Chicco took over in 1995 and completely restored the interior to its original splendor. Whether you love a great steak or you're a seafood fan, Gage & Tollner's Chef James Henderson has what you're craving with old-fashioned, top-notch service. By the time the dessert cart is rolled to your table, you'll be making plans for your next visit. Free valet parking.

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Inaka Sushi House
235 Seventh Ave. at Fourth Street, (718) 499-7856 (AmEx, DC, Disc, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$9.60-\$16.50.

The making of those beautiful little works of art called sushi is so fascinating many people will prefer sitting at the bar where owner Joanne Wu's cadre of superb sushi chefs work their magic. Others may prefer the comfort of Inaka's dining room. Either way, a good idea for beginners is to order Chef Jack Chen's nine-piece sushi deluxe box, which contains yellow tail, salmon, mackerel, fat fish roll, crab meat, white fish in several varieties, shrimp and tuna roll. Sushi can also be ordered a la carte and in more modest combinations. Teriyaki fans will find Inaka's dishes expertly seasoned and melt-in-your-mouth tender.

Lichee Nut

162 Montague St. at Clinton Street, downstairs, (718) 522-5565 (AmEx, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$6-\$12.

This Brooklyn Heights Chinese restaurant has had several locations, owners and chefs, but throughout has maintained the high quality that keeps customers coming back for over 20 years. Owner Jerry Shen has dedicated himself to keeping the restaurant's line authentic. Chef Eric Wu cooks in both Szechuan and Cantonese styles and prepares a broad spectrum of dishes that include Cantonese-style beef short ribs and the house special — a generous plate of jumbo shrimp sautéed with Chinese vegetables and lichee nuts — which, by the way, are not nuts at all, but sweet and succulent fruit.

Lighthouse Tavern Bar and Grill

433 Fifth Ave. at Carroll Street, (718) 788-8070, www.lighthousebar.com (Disc, MC, V) Entrees: \$7-\$9.

This casual-themed pub, which opened on Sept. 1 in Park Slope, offers dining at the bar, in cozy banquettes or on the charming rear patio (weather permitting). In addition to Chef David Quinn's variety of burgers, he offers staples such as mozzarella sticks and chicken fingers and distinguishes himself by offering seafood and Costa Rican bistro, or bite-size versions of homemade empanadas (fried balls of yuca dough filled with ground beef and cheese), ceviche, tortilla and more. Call for delivery.

Marco Polo Ristorante

345 Court St. at Union Street, (718) 852-5015, www.marcopoloristorante.com (AmEx, DC, Disc, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$15.95-\$29.95.

One of Brooklyn's most elegant dining rooms, Carroll Gardens' Marco Polo boasts valet parking, a formally dressed and knowledgeable waitstaff and a sophisticated menu that reflects the taste of its owner, Joe Chiappa, a veteran restaurateur. Marco Polo has an Italian menu that includes an array of hot and cold appetizers, soups, salads, pasta, fish, chicken, veal, steaks and chops prepared by Chef Francesco Intrigo. The dessert wagon offers pastries, cakes, tortes, fruits, sorbet and gelato. Marco Polo is open for lunch and dinner.

Mezcal's

522 Court St. at Huntington Street, (718) 237-2230 (AmEx, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$8-\$18.

Chef Moises Gallardo specializes in fajitas — beef or chicken with onions and peppers served sizzling on a platter with rice and beans. Another Meza's favorite is mole poblano, chicken breast cooked in a dark brown sauce with four different kinds of peppers, plantains and hints of chocolate and spice. Meza's also offers Mexican desserts like vanilla fried ice cream, which is ice cream covered with a corn meal crust and then deep-fried. Of course, it wouldn't be a festa without all of those great Mexican drinks from Meza's tequila bar including fresh, lime jatos margaritas. They have another location at 151 Atlantic Ave. at Clinton Street, (718) 643-6000.

Michael's

2929 Avenue R at Nostrand Avenue, (718) 998-7851, www.michaelsbrooklyn.com (AmEx, Carte Blanche, DC, Disc, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$17-\$30.

More than 35 years ago, Michael Cacace opened a small pizzeria with three tables and a takeout window. Today, his sons, Fred and John, preside over an elegant restaurant in Sheepshead Bay with a spacious dining room with linen-covered tables. A pianist plays every night on a baby grand.

Chef John Pavia's hot seafood antipasto for two includes grilled octopus, calamari, oregano, shrimp scallop, baked clams and mussels marinara. A delicious cabernet sauce accompanies juicy rack of lamb. Located on a quiet street, Michael's might be one of Brooklyn's hidden treasures if word hadn't gotten out years ago — mostly from satisfied customers who return from all over the metropolitan area. Michael's pastry shop and ice cream parlor are located across the street.

Omija Japanese Restaurant

8618 Fourth Ave. at 86th Street, (718) 748-1977 (AmEx, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$8.95-\$15.95.

Omija Japanese Restaurant, celebrating its first anniversary, in March, offers a traditional Japanese menu for lunch and dinner daily. Enjoy Chef Ben Chin's wide variety of salads, sushi, sashimi, tempura and tempura dishes or choose among the chef's signature dishes: ginger pork (thinly sliced pork sautéed in ginger sauce) and naru ebi (tempura eggplant) and shrimp. In the afternoon, the dessert are fried ice cream, fried bananas and mochi ice cream, made from sticky rice and offered in a variety of flavors. Lunch specials are offered 11:30 am to 4 pm daily. Omija is currently offering 50 percent off sushi or sashimi all day long.

Tavern on Dean

755 Dean St. at Underhill Street, (718) 638-3326 (MC, Visa) Entrees: \$12.95-\$18.95.

Tavern on Dean is a cozy American tavern. Chef Hugo Annador's menu offers bar food — hamburgers and chili sandwiches — and chicken fingers and distinguishes himself by offering seafood and Costa Rican bistro, or bite-size versions of homemade empanadas (fried balls of yuca dough filled with ground beef and cheese), ceviche, tortilla and more. Call for delivery.

200 Fifth Restaurant/Bar

200 Fifth Ave. at Union Street, (718) 638-2925, www.200fifth.com (AmEx, DC, Disc, MC, Visa) Entrees: \$6.50-\$24.95.

Open since 1986, 200 Fifth Restaurant/Bar offers a 42-foot bar, more than 25 TVs, two pool tables and an internet jukebox. Their state-of-the-art sound system gets put to the test on Thursdays when they offer live R&B and funk and on Fridays and Saturdays when they offer live salsa music.

Not to be eclipsed by the entertainment, 200 Fifth's Chef Mandy Mappette (formerly of Knickerbocker Grill and The Grocery) offers dinner daily specials as well as a long list of affordably priced entrees: steak au poivre, pan-seared salmon, burgers and pastas.

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All for 'Love'

One World Symphony delivers 'Love Letters' program to Brooklyn Heights audiences

By Kevin Filipksi
for The Brooklyn Papers

Sung Jin Hong will conduct the One World Symphony in a unique Valentine's Day program — aptly titled "Love Letters" — on Feb. 13 at the Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity, in Brooklyn Heights.

"All of the works were chosen for their sheer feeling of romantic love," Hong told GO Brooklyn in an exclusive interview.

"Love Letters" juxtaposes five works with excerpts of letters from composers on the program and their loved ones, read by two actors.

"The crux of the program is Mahler's 'Adagietto,' a short movement from his Fifth Symphony," said Hong, "which has become very well-known and through the [1971] movie [by Luciano Visconti] 'Death in Venice,' where it was featured very prominently."

In a move away from conventional concert practice, the orchestra will play Mahler's "Adagietto" twice.

"It's a very passionate work, and our two performances of it will show that," Hong explained. "The first time will be the modern orchestral setting where the violins are all together, but in Mahler's era, he wanted the violins across from each other because of the way that he wrote — he composed lots of counterpoint between the first and second violins, and this is a very effective way for audiences to hear it."

"The major advantage is that the audience will be able to experience two ways of hearing Mahler's work," he said. "I will ask the audience during the concert if they hear a difference between both ways of performing it."

For Hong, this encore makes the concert a new experience for audiences. "Orchestras are struggling and are looking for ways to survive and gain audience support," said Hong. "We're trying to find our own creative ways of doing that without being too lecturing or intellectual — this is the way Mahler intended it heard, so let's see if there's a difference to our ears."

While at the podium, Hong, who just won a spot as an active conductor in Kurt Masur's Conducting Seminar at the Manhattan School of Music Symphony, is in position to manipulate the audience's experience. "I'm tempted to perform it two ways," he said. "There's the original, slow, weighty, tragic way, which was made famous by conductors like Leonard Bernstein, and then there's the 'love letter to Alma' (Mahler's wife) way, which is less ponderous but still dramatic. When I conduct, I like to move it along and let the music speak for itself."



Please, Mr. Postman: Conductor Sung Jin Hong's Feb. 13 program will include readings by actors of love letters written by the featured composers.

for itself."

Following the Mahler work, a movement of Beethoven's final string quartet, "Cantata," will be played in an arrangement for string orchestra. That final quartet was dedicated to Beethoven's nephew, with whom he shared a close relationship throughout his life, which is how it fits into this program. Hong also sees a link between "Cantata" and Mahler's "Adagietto."

"Mahler was directly influenced by Beethoven's last string quartet," Hong explained. "Both Beethoven and Mahler" See **ONE WORLD** on page 13

MUSIC

One World Symphony's performance of works by Gustav Mahler, Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Leoš Janáček and Gary Surden takes place Feb. 13 at 8 pm at the Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity, on the corner of Montague and Clinton streets in Brooklyn Heights. Tickets are \$20 at the door, \$15 in advance and \$12 at the door, \$10 in advance for seniors (65 and older) and students (with ID). For tickets, call (718) 788-7138 or visit www.oneworldsymphony.org.

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BROOKLYN HEIGHTS Jewish International Film Festival



Brooklyn Heights Jewish International Film Festival explores Jewish issues through fine films of artistic excellence. We seek to examine universal Jewish themes through post-film dialogue with directors, actors, filmmakers, critics and scholars.

Saturday, February 7, 2004 • 8:00 pm - 10:00 pm
Schmelvis: In search of Elvis Presley's Jewish Roots (2001)
Director: Max Wallace; Canada • Runtime: 76 minutes; MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Wes "The King" Jackson's fascinating discovery that his great-great-grandfather was Jewish leads a diverse group of filmmakers, including an ultra Orthodox and Jewish Elvis impersonator, a Rabbi and the filmmaker, on a quest to Memphis to find out what Elvis fans think of this revelation. (He did wear a Chai around his neck). By the time the group heads off to find a new Elvis, it's all over in a head. Funny, insightful and wonderfully witty, Schmelvis brings a unique spin on celebrity, Judaism and religious perspectives. Not a bore.

Post-film concert and dialogue with Schmelvis, the world famous Orthodox Jewish Elvis impersonator.

Saturday, February 14, 2004 • 8:00 pm - 10:00 pm
Welcome to the Waks Family (2002)

Director: Barbara Chobodsky; Australia • Runtime: 52 minutes; MPAA Rating: Not Rated
With 17 children from the same two parents, the Orthodox Waks family is one of Australia's largest. Everyday life in the Waks household is a logistical challenge of monumental proportions. Having two main buses for transportation and five ovens for kosher cooking helps. The director followed the warm and lively Waks family over years and was privy to the wedding of the eldest daughter and the struggle of one son to break away from the religious life of his parents.

Post-film dialogue with Waks family member, Yossi Waks.

Saturday, February 21, 2004 • 8:00 pm - 10:00 pm
One Day in September (1999)

Director: Kevin Macdonald; USA • Runtime: 92 minutes; MPAA Rating: Not Rated
Munich, August 1972. The Olympics of peace and joy commence, symbolizing Germany's post war rehabilitation in the eyes of the international community. But one day into the games, eight Palestinian terrorist break in and take eleven Israeli athletes hostage, demanding the release of hundreds of political prisoners. As the world watches, the West German Police plan to overpower the captives. This Academy Award-winning documentary includes archive footage, eyewitness testimony, and the only interview ever recorded with the sole surviving member of the terrorist group.

Post-film dialogue with Simcha Weinstein, former associate of the British Film Commission.

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Go West

Borough Park native conjures the spirit of Brooklyn legend Mae West in new play

By **Paulanne Simmons**
for The Brooklyn Papers

Playwright LindaAnn Loschiavo was born in Borough Park and raised in Bensonhurst. But she never had much interest in fellow-Brooklynite Mae West until she moved to Manhattan.

There Loschiavo's curiosity about the history of the block where she lived, West Ninth Street near Sixth Avenue, led to some surprising discoveries.

"As I started doing the research, I realized that many judges had lived on the street, because the Jefferson Market Courthouse was there," Loschiavo told GO Brooklyn.

It was at the courthouse that, in the spring of 1927, a 35-year-old rising star named Mae West was sentenced 10 days at the Women's Workhouse on Welfare Island (now Roosevelt Island) for obscenity in her Broadway play titled "Sex." And it is in that same building — now the Jefferson Market Courthouse Library — that Loschiavo's play, "Courtin' Mae West," will have its first staged reading on Feb. 7.

Loschiavo says her play is about a journalist who wants to become romantically involved with West.

"She's interested in him because he can give her editorial coverage," said Loschiavo. "There are no courtroom scenes, but the play does talk about her arrest. Through Mae West, I can tell other stories, too — like the story of [New York call girl] Starr Faithful, who died at the age of 25 while at a boat party and inspired John O'Hara's novel later turned into a film



Jail bait: Mae West, in a scene from "She Done Him Wrong" (1933), is the subject of LindaAnn Loschiavo's new play.

West was often referred to as "the German girl," by neighbors.

West's mother, Matilda (Tillie) married the Anglo-Irish John West. West was a former featherweight prizefighter nicknamed "Battling Jack." Tillie was a corset model.

"We can assume that Mae, who was barely 5 feet tall and always wore platform shoes, had pretty much her mother's figure," says Loschiavo. As for her father's influence, it was while visiting the gym that young Mae developed her taste for those "beautiful men" with "magnificent muscles."

Backed by a pushy stage mother, West started in vaudeville, appearing alongside Harry Houdini and Dan the Drinking Dog. By the time she was 8 years old, West was appearing regularly at the Gotham Theatre in Brooklyn.

Bushwick, which originally included what is now Greenpoint, Williamsburg and Ridgewood, was once home, in its eastern edge, to many of the city's best theaters and was considered an

alternative to Manhattan's theater district.

"Sex" was West's first venture on Broadway. Finally, in 1928, West had her first Broadway smash hit with "Diamond Lil" — the play that created the wisecracking, warm-hearted persona we all came to know.

But above all, West was known for her enthusiastically salacious one-liners. Her words of precious wisdom include: "It's better to be looked over than overlooked"; "When women go wrong, men go right after them"; "When choosing between two evils, I always like to try the one I've never tried before"; "I generally avoid temptation unless I can't resist it"; and "It's not the men in my life that counts — it's the life in my men."

Looking back on Mae West's long and lusty career, and Ridgewood, was everything Madonna could have been — if she'd only been born in Brooklyn.

THEATER

A staged reading of LindaAnn Loschiavo's "Courtin' Mae West" will be presented at the Jefferson Market Library, on Feb. 7, at 2 p.m. The library is located at 425 South Ave. at West 10th Street in Manhattan. Dress in Roaring Twenties garb to get a free gift. Attend a Mae West look-alike contest at a private after-party at 3:30 p.m. at a nearby location. The event is free and open to the public. RSVP to nonstopny@aol.com or (212) 243-4334.

starring Elizabeth Taylor) "Butterfield 8"; the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti; and the exploits of Amelia Earhart, who was created by the press even before her first solo flight.

West was born Mary Jane West, in 1893, on Herbert Street, in what is now Greenpoint. Later, her family lived on Bushwick Avenue and Euclid Avenue. At that time, Bushwick was the capital of beer making. West's maternal grandfather, Jakob Delker Doelger, was a Jewish-Bavarian brewmaster, and

World of dance

The Brooklyn Arts Council presents "Folk Feet: Celebrating Traditional Dance in Brooklyn" at Brooklyn College's Walt Whitman Theater on Feb. 8. The day-long event features dancers that are participating in a year-long documentation project, helmed by BAC's Kay Turner, exploring the diversity of community-based dance traditions in Brooklyn.

The day of dance begins with an afternoon program, from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., dance workshops from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and an evening program, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., featuring many dance troupes including the Polish American Folk Dance Company, whose "Kashubian Medley" (pictured) is influenced by the Baltic sea-port of Gdansk.

Among the cultures that will be featured are those of Norway, Georgia, the Ukraine, Bangladesh and Trinidad. Not to mention performances of Irish step dancing, Yemese traditions, the Puerto Rican bomba and much more.

In addition to surveying, documenting and presenting the range of community dance traditions in Brooklyn, the "Folk



Feet" project will produce an archive of video and audio interviews, photos and transcripts.

The project is sponsored by Danksin and the National Endowment for the Arts' Preservation and Heritage Program.

Admission to all of the Feb. 8 events is free. The theater is located on the Brooklyn College campus, one block from the junction of Flatbush and Nostrand avenues in Midwood. For more information, call (718) 625-0000. — Lisa J. Curtis

ause music

Brooklyn Symphony presents work by Greenpoint composer Evan Hause

By **Kevin Filipksi**
for The Brooklyn Papers

Even with works by eminent composers like and Dmitri Shostakovich on the bill, the main attraction of the Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra's upcoming concert is a new work by a local composer.

The Brooklyn premiere of the Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra by Evan Hause, a North Carolina native who now lives in Greenpoint, will be part of the orchestra's Feb. 11 program in Walt Whitman Hall on the Brooklyn College campus.

"Evan's a Brooklyn composer, and we have a commitment to doing at least one composition by a Brooklyn composer every year," said Nick Armstrong, the orchestra's artistic director. "Evan's music was known to me through conversations I was hearing from different musicians. But I never knew his music, so it was a most fortuitous meeting when he showed me his work."

"He actually met me one day with the concerto's score under his arm, and I discovered it was a great showcase for the soloist and the orchestra."

The soloist is Eric Berlin, who also performed the work in its 2001 premiere, with the Albany Symphony Orchestra. "Eric is a superb musician, and our audience is in for a real treat," said Armstrong.

Hause's 18-minute long concerto is in three movements, with enough technical challenges to tempt even an accomplished musician like Berlin, who plays a "flamper" (a cross between a flugelhorn and a trumpet) in the middle movement.

"Evan has written the orchestral parts in such a way so that every so often there's a big lush string sound, giving the piece a real element of 1940s Hollywood film writing," Armstrong explained.

"He'll have me for saying that I know," he said, laughing, "but there are many moments of romanticism in the piece."

As for Shostakovich's First Symphony, Armstrong remained awed by its confidence, vitality and witty use of the orchestra.

"[The symphony] was composed as a graduation piece!" he exclaimed. "Shostakovich wrote it when he was just 19, but it has an incredibly mature sound to it."

Of the upcoming program, Armstrong said it would be less structured than his norm.

"I usually plan my programs with some sort of discernible theme to them, but this time, these are all just pieces I wanted to do," he said.

Still, some sort of thematic allusions presented themselves during rehearsals. "Actually, as a few of the musicians pointed out to me, there are some similarities between the Shostakovich symphony and the Hause trumpet concerto, even though they were written nearly a hundred years apart," he noted.

"Some of the orchestral textures and rhythms are very similar. That being said, Hause's concerto is clearly a more contemporary work, and it's not Russian in its sound at all — on the contrary, it's very American."

The final piece in the program is the overture from the operetta "The Gypsy Baron" by Johann Strauss II, composed in 1885.

The orchestra's next concert is March 31 at the Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity, at Montague and Clinton streets in Brooklyn Heights, and will be led by

by Johann Strauss II, composed in 1885.

The orchestra's next concert is March 31 at the Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity, at Montague and Clinton streets in Brooklyn Heights, and will be led by

MUSIC

The Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra performs works by Johann Strauss, Dmitri Shostakovich and Evan Hause on Feb. 11, at 8 p.m., at Walt Whitman Hall, on the Brooklyn College campus, one block from the junction of Nostrand and Flatbush avenues in Midwood. Admission is free but a \$10 donation is suggested. For more information, visit www.brooklyn-symphony-orchestra.org.

guest conductor Arkady Leytush. The program consists of two audience favorites: Edward Grieg's Concerto for Piano in A Minor (with young pianist Fan Yang as soloist) and Brahms' Symphony No. 4 in E Minor.

Noting the differences between his Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra and the better-known Brooklyn Philharmonic, Armstrong said, "We appeal to a different audience in that it's very much a local audience, and we aim at local neighborhoods in our audience-building. These neighborhoods are not really served by the Brooklyn Philharmonic."



Evan Hause

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The orchestra's mission is to serve the local community, and the concerts are free, with a suggested donation of \$10. That effort, Armstrong noted, seems to be working. "At the last concert, it was probably the best attendance we had in a long time," he said, "and it was very gratifying that we did so well."

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WEEK FIVE - March 3

The Dissiminator - R. Baal Shem Tov

(Method: Devushim/Adhesion)

WEEK SIX - March 10

The Teacher - Maggid of Mezritch

(Method: Ajin/Nothingness)

WEEK SEVEN - March 17

The Intellectual - R. Schneur Zalman of Liadi

(Method: Hissadim/Contemplation)

WEEK EIGHT - March 24

The Loner - R. Nachman Bravler

(Method: Hissadim/Isolation)

WEEK NINE - April 3

The Ethicist - R. Yisroel Salanter

(Method: Dvashon/Handel/Accounting of the Soul)

WEEK TEN - April 21

The Educator - R. Nisimim Kalmich of Peseznitz

(Method: Hissadim/Quiescing the Mind)

Cong. B'nai Avraham

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ONE WORLD...

Continued from page 11

ler were revolutionaries — the sheer length and difficulty of Mahler's symphonies harks back to Beethoven's last string quartets," which were — and still are — considered among the most complex music ever written, with the partial exception of the relatively straightforward last quartet.

Also on the program is Brahms' "Ophelia Lied," originally scored for voice and piano, here orchestrated by composer Arribert Reimann for strings, and sung by mezzo-soprano Natalie Anne Havemeyer, a Bronx resident.

"That's a real interesting piece, re-orchestrated very simply and sensitively," Hong noted. "Ophelia's madness is depicted in a very gentle way. And Natalie is a fantastic vocal artist who will sing in our 'Marriage of Figaro' in March."

Leon Janacek's second string quartet, titled "Intimate Letters" after his correspondence with his late-career muse, Kamila Stosslova, is represented on this program by its slow movement. Some of Janacek's and Stosslova's

letters — along with Mahler's and wife Alma's — will be excerpted during the concert.

Last but not least, a short work by Park Slope resident Gary Sunden will be played. His seven-minute "Vivace for Strings," composed in 1995 as the prelude to an opera Sunden adapted from Moliere's "Sganarelle, ou le Cocu Imaginaire," came to Hong's attention in quite a strange way.

"Gary's actually a lawyer who has been attending our concerts, which I wasn't aware of," said Hong. "He wrote a nice letter to me complimenting us and telling us that he believed in our mission, and I thought, 'What does this lawyer know about music?'"

"But I listened to his work and it was very fresh to hear," said Hong. "The opera the prelude is from is about two young lovers, so it fits into the theme of our program — I was surprised at how well it does fit. He's very excited to hear it played ... just as we are to play it."

Read  online every week at

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SILENCE...

Continued from page 1
and Flatbush avenues where Ratner wants to build a 620-foot-of-ice tower adjacent to a Nets arena.

For the most part, Ratner's Atlantic Yards project will likely skirt community board and city review by going through the much less rigorous state review process.

The community board is the first stop along the approximately seven-month city Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) and is followed by public hearings before and votes by the borough president, City Planning Commission and City Council.

While the role of the board is purely advisory, its ULURP vote and recommendations send a clear message to elected officials about the concerns and wishes of the communities it serves.

Except in this case where it sends no message at all. "I know they voted against the committee recommendation," it is all Hardy Adelson, senior vice president of the city Economic Development Corporation, would say when asked to interpret the vote.

Some feared that a vote against the committee recommendation could be viewed as a vote in favor of eminent domain, since the committee had voted against those portions of the plan.

"The community board has essentially taken no vote on anything," said CB2 member Ken Diamondstone, who made a motion before the vote to consider each of the 22 actions and vote on them individually.

That motion was voted down by the board.

"It was strange that the meeting didn't continue with some request for another resolution," said Diamondstone.

Asked afterwards why she did not take action to ensure the board adopted some resolution or recommendation on the application,

Responding to the loss of 21,000 city jobs to New Jersey in the 1990s, the Bloomberg administration announced the Downtown Brooklyn Plan last April.

The mayor pledged to fund \$100 million in infrastructure improvements and construction over the next 10 years, but the project would still be largely dependent on market conditions and the ability to lure business and developers.

Critics have called the \$100 million "chicken feed" and said much more would be needed for traffic mitigation and subway construction alone.

Just last week, as CB2 was gearing up to vote on the plan, Deputy Mayor Dan Doctoroff sent a multi-page letter to the board outlining a number of traffic mitigations the city would consider studying.

But many members said it was too little, too late and urged the city to do the traffic studies before pushing ahead with the plan.

Let's do the birth control planning now, not after the baby is born," CB2 member Bill Harris wrote in a Jan. 28 letter to fellow board members.

So what happens now? The massive application goes to Borough President Mary Markowitz, who was hosting a reception in honor of Bishop Nicolas DiMarzio, spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn Tuesday night and did not attend the vote.

"Although the community board took no clear position on the Downtown Plan many important issues were raised during the several committee and general board meetings," said Markowitz, adding, "I look forward to hearing more about these issues."

The next public hearing on the Downtown Plan will be hosted by Markowitz on Feb. 18, at 6 p.m. at Borough Hall.

"We have to have the borough president do the right thing," said Nancy Wolf, chairwoman of the CB2 Traffic and Transportation committee, who is asking Markowitz to advocate for the committee's extensive list of recommendations with regard to the Downtown Plan.

John Manbeck, president and owner of the Dodgers, complained that the team had grown Ebbers Field, so he sold the stadium to Marvin Kratter — later the creator of the Ebbers Field Houses on the site — intending to lease it back for the next three years. He wanted a new, larger, round, domed ballpark which he thought would be fine at Atlantic and Flatbush avenues.

Then-Brooklyn Borough President John Cashmore approved of the planned new ballpark but Parks Commissioner Robert Moses did not. Moses said he did not want public money involved in the construction of a new stadium. Then he chastised O'Malley for even thinking of using eminent domain and the city's powers of eminent domain to build a sports stadium.



Ken Diamondstone



Shirley McRae

14 BWN

THE BROOKLYN PAPERS • WWW.BROOKLYNPAPERS.COM

February 7, 2004

Nets site renters left out in eminent domain payouts

By Deborah Kolben

Robin Weil is an artist who lives in a small studio apartment on a quiet residential street in Prospect Heights.

She was attracted to the neighborhood 11 years ago by cheap rent and access to more than 10 subway lines, but now Weil lives in constant fear of becoming homeless.

That's because if real estate developer Bruce Ratner has it his way, the place that Weil calls home will be razed to make way for a 19,000-seat, glass-walled basketball arena to house his newly purchased New Jersey Nets.

The \$2.5 billion project, which would also include 17 sweeping residential and office towers, would require the condemnation of about 70 buildings

on six blocks around the site at Atlantic and Flatbush avenues extending into Prospect Heights.

While owners who are displaced are guaranteed fair market value for their property, renters are guaranteed almost nothing.

"The people who get the hardest hit are the renters," said Michael Rikon, a partner in Goldstein, Goldstein & Goldie, a Manhattan law firm specializing in condemnation law.

"The Empire State Development Corporation provides relocation assistance [for renters], but there's no statute that requires them to make payment," added Rikon.

Because the majority of the projects will be built on the MTA-owned Long Island Rail Road yards, the project is expected to go through state rather than city review.

Under the law, rent-stabilized tenants are not guaranteed similarly priced apartments or other rent stabilized apartments, according to Rikon.

That news was disquieting to James Maloblocki, a jazz musician who has been living in a rent-stabilized studio at 473 Dean St. for the past 17 years.

If Maloblocki loses his \$600 a month studio he says he'll be forced to leave the area.

There are 224 renters that would be displaced by the arena plan, according to anti-arena activist Patti Hagan.

On the same block, a co-op building and two recently converted condominiums, with apartments fetching between \$400,000 and \$1.4 million, have joined together under the name "Develop Don't Destroy."

The group has retained Manhattan attorney Jack Lester to represent the more than 100 tenants living in the

three buildings.

And Maloblocki, 52, said he might try to find a lawyer to find out about options for renters.

Deborah Wetzler, a spokeswoman for the Empire State Development Corporation, said the while the state is responsible for "relocation" of renters, every situation is different.

"We do everything we can," she said.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a major backer of the arena plan, has touted Ratner as a "class act" who will take care of the displaced.

"This developer had a pretty good reputation when he built Metrotech," Bloomberg said last month.

Ratner is best known for developing the Metrotech office campus spreading across 10 blocks in Downtown Brooklyn.

"I call Ratner the 'poster boy' of sponsors," said Rikon, who said the developer is often "overly fair."

Asked this week what kind of compensation would be offered to renters, Ratner spokesman Barry Baum said the developer was "not going to negotiate all of this in the press."

"It's not fair to the people who are going to be impacted," said Baum. "We will talk personally to the renters and the owners."

Where to GO...

Continued from page 12...

sing along. \$8. Call for time. 7301 Budge Blvd. (718) 745-3698.

ADOPTION FEST. NYC Animal Care and Control offers cats and dogs for adoption. Noon to 4 p.m. Prospect Park Picnic House, enter Prospect Park West at Fifth Street. (718) 272-7200.

MEETING. AARP Overeager Chapter meets. 1 p.m. New members age 50 and older welcome. Bay Ridge Center for Older Adults, 6955 Fourth Ave. (718) 748-0450.

AUTHOR TALK. Brooklyn Public Library, Central branch, hosts "Brooklyn Writers for Brooklyn Readers" series. Today, author Victor LaValle reads from his debut novel "The Ecstasy." 2 p.m. Grand Army Plaza. (718) 230-2100. Free.

SINGLES EVENT. Music, food and social reception hosted by First Evangelical Free Church. Joel and Carol Silberman of Tenderhearted Ministries are guest speakers. 7 p.m. 6501 Sixth Ave. (718) 626-6229. Free.

SUPERHERO SUPPER CLUB. Annual Valentine's Day event. Everyone is invited to wear red. \$10 cover. 7:30 p.m. 63 York St. (718) 243-9025.

FILM FEST. Brooklyn Heights Jewish International Film Festival presents "Welcome to the Waka Family" (2002). 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. Congregation B'nai Abraham, 117 Remsen St. (718) 918-4840. ext. 15. Free.

VALENTINE PARTY. Creative Arts Studio offers an evening of dancing. \$20. 8:30 p.m. 310 Atlantic Ave. (718) 797-5600.

SUN, FEB 15

PERFORMANCE

SWORD DANCE FEST. 19th annual event sponsored by Half Moon Sword. Locations: First Unitarian Church, Piermont and Monroe Place at 12:30 p.m., Park Slope Methodist, South Avenue and Eighth Street at 1 p.m., Old First Reformed Church, Seventh Avenue and Carroll Street at 12:30 p.m., Picnic House, Prospect Park, enter at Prospect Park West at Third Street at 2:30 p.m. (800) 431-2133, ext. 231. Free.

CONCERT. Symphonia presents music celebrating Valentine's Day. \$15. 4 p.m. Christ Church, 325 Clinton St. (718) 624-0083.

BARGENMUSIC. presents a chamber music concert of Mendelssohn and Mozart. \$35. 4 p.m. Fulton Ferry Landing. (718) 624-0083.

PLAY. Long Island University presents "Wild." 2 p.m. See Sat., Feb. 14.

HEIGHTS PLAYERS. "The Sisters Rosenzweig." 2 p.m. See Sat., Feb. 14.

RAM. Brooklyn Academy of Music presents Shakespeare's "Pericles." 2 p.m. See Sat., Feb. 14.

CHILDREN

WYCKOFF FARMHOUSE. Kids and their families are invited to visit New York's oldest house. \$2 adults, \$1 seniors and children. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 5816 Canden Road. (718) 629-5400.

GROUNDHOG SERIES. Brooklyn Arts Exchange presents Dine Fun Dance Theater in "Web," an interactive dance show. \$6. \$5 members/low-income. 2 p.m. 421 Fifth Ave. (718) 832-0018.

AFRICAN MUSIC. Brooklyn Conservatory of Music invites kids to a workshop for young audiences. Learn about African music through songs and games. \$5. 3 p.m. 58 Seventh Ave. (718) 622-3300.

PUPPETWORKS. "Rumpelstiltskin." 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. See Sat., Feb. 14.

MUSICAL. Brooklyn Family Theater presents "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown." 5 p.m. See Sat., Feb. 14.

OTHER

SINGLES BRUNCH. Hosted by Bay Ridge Singles Club. Call for details. (718) 745-8659.

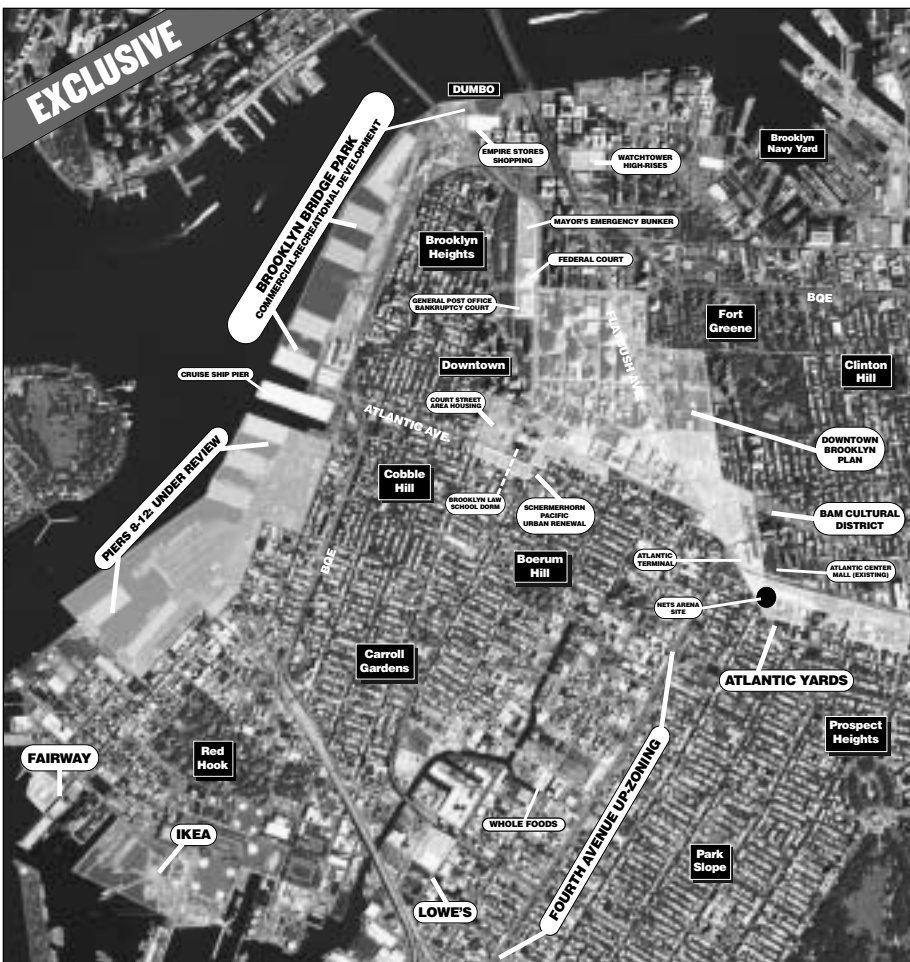
DISCUSSION. Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture presents a member's report from a recent visit to Israel and Palestine. 1:30 p.m. 53 Prospect Park West. (718) 748-2972. Free.

GALLERY TALK. Brooklyn Historical Society presents "African Americans at Work." Learn about the work experiences and contributions of African-Americans and Caribbean-Americans in Brooklyn over the centuries. Included in museum admission of \$6. 4 p.m. 128 Pierrepont St. (718) 222-4111.

POET READING. The Phoenix House Poetry Workshop invites poets to read from their works. Open only to poets. 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. 50 Jay St. Call for ticketing time for readings. (917) 559-1576.

AUTHOR TALK. Brooklyn Public Library, Central branch, presents author Eve Hoffman speaking from her book "After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Aftermath of the Holocaust." 4 p.m. Grand Army Plaza. (718) 230-2100. Free.

READING. Spiral Thought Magazine hosts a spoken word performance, presenting original poetry and prose. 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Fall Cafe, 307 Smith St. (718) 852-2310. Free.



This satellite image from Space Imaging, annotated by The Brooklyn Papers, shows the massive amount of new development currently in the works or proposed for the area in and around Downtown Brooklyn. An enlarged version of this image ran on the front page of last week's Brooklyn Papers.

Stadium battles both past and present

Many years ago, Brooklyn had its very own major league baseball team, the Dodgers.

You may have heard of them. In 1955, Walter O'Malley, president and owner of the Dodgers, complained that the team had grown Ebbers Field, so he sold the stadium to Marvin Kratter — later the creator of the Ebbers Field Houses on the site — intending to lease it back for the next three years.

He wanted a new, larger, round, domed ballpark which he thought would be fine at Atlantic and Flatbush avenues.

Then-Brooklyn Borough President John Cashmore approved of the planned new ballpark but Parks Commissioner Robert Moses did not. Moses said he did not want public money involved in the construction of a new stadium. Then he chastised O'Malley for even thinking of using eminent domain and the city's powers of eminent domain to build a sports stadium.

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to mend fences. Then Moses offered to build a stadium for the Dodgers in Flushing Meadows, Queens, at Parks Department expense. If O'Malley didn't accept, he concluded, "It won't happen."

Moses was right. The estimate on the proposed stadium and land was revealed to be \$20.7 million. But L.A. was more accommodating. They were willing to dedicate land in Chavez Ravine — land that had been designated for public housing for poor Mexican immigrants — as a stadium site for the Dodgers.

O'Malley counter-offered Moses by offering him the Atlantic Avenue site — if the city only would condemn the land, filled with "slums," according to journalist Doris Kearns Goodwin in her book "Wait Till Next Year." Meanwhile, on the West Coast, the site was 300 acres of the river and the \$4 million for preparation O'Malley would pay for the \$10 million stadium. Writes Michael Shapiro in his "The Last Good Season: Brooklyn, The

Dodgers, and Their Final Pennant Race Together."

They refused to condemn the Atlantic Avenue land; they hesitated to build a \$30 million stadium.

In October 1957, O'Malley flew to L.A. with a contract for his Dodgers. After several ugly scenes in which people were evicted, Dodgers Stadium opened in 1962. Two years later, Shea Stadium opened in Flushing Meadows.

Professional baseball, of course, returned to Brooklyn in 2001. Fostered by a mayor who drove to have two farm teams in the city no matter what the cost, the Cyclones opened in Coney Island's brand new KeySpan Park.

It was a dream that O'Malley could only wish for. Not only did the city pick up all expenses, it built on its own land, plus the \$4 million for preparation O'Malley would pay for the \$10 million stadium. Writes Michael Shapiro in his "The Last Good Season: Brooklyn, The

relic of the old Coney Island. The winners were Fred Wilpon, who owns the Mets and Cyclones, baseball fans in Brooklyn, and the Coney Island neighborhood.

So Brooklyn is having a renaissance, a rebirth of its better days. Risky neighborhoods are being gentrified, gourmet chefs have commanded key neighborhood strips, condos are replacing parking lots, and even our prison has closed for lack of business.

Now we have new developers and politicians to fill in for the Moses and O'Malleys of yesterday. Their names are Ratner and Bloomberg, Pataki and Markowitz, Kalikow and Gargano. And the scenario hasn't changed much. They all want the same results: big profits at the expense of taxpayers.

In the 19th century, owners of railroad had their own bag of tricks to "condemn" land. Courts were closed on the weekends so railroad condemnations started late on Friday. Once rails ran over private land, the railroads

had the right of way, which the courts would then open on Monday — or Tuesday, if the better days.

Robert Moses understood it when he confiscated Long Island farms and Brooklyn neighborhoods for his beloved highways. Now we have the Nets coming to the same neighborhood O'Malley desired, which happens to involve a railroad: the LIRR.

The winner gets not only a stadium but the extra-confiscated land that goes with it — at taxpayer expense.

The prize that Bruce Ratner wants is land that Moses refused to give to O'Malley. Now Ratner has the governor willing to confiscate land, the MTA willing to offer air rights and the borough president willing to be a cheerleader.

My, how times have changed!

John Manbeck, the former Brooklyn Borough Historian, is a columnist for The Brooklyn Papers.

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